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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

DREAMS

OFFICIALLY it is not possible to dream inside the ghotul, for Lingo and the other ghotul gods protect those who sleep there, and indeed I believe that in many places the boys and girls dream very little, enjoying sound and satisfying sleep in the security, warmth and delight of their peculiar realm.

But not all ghotul are equally happy. In Binjhli for example, where there was a strange atmosphere of jealousy and frustration, I heard a great deal about dreams. And in all villages there are official and standardized dreams which are believed to be the normal means of receiving communications from gods or ancestors.

It is not possible, I think, to provide material on this subject which will be of much value to the psycho-analyst. It is very difficult to obtain the Muria's associations to their dreams; their memory is poor and they are so timid that too prolonged an inquiry is likely to make it impossible to obtain any information at all. But it is possible to discover various ideas and attitudes of the Muria through an examination of their dreams, especially since the most important are of the official type.

What is the Muria theory of dreams? Where do they come from and why do we see them? Some say that all sleep is a dream; sleep is the food by which man's life is recreated and 'the dream is the chutney of sleep'. As with other Indian aboriginals the Muria theory of dreams is closely related to the idea of the soul or *jiwa*. The *jiwa* leaves the body in sleep, goes here and there and what it sees during its adventures is the dream.[1] The power of the *jiwa* to leave the body is described in a significant tale from Ulera.

> One day long ago two men went to a blacksmith's shop to rest. One fell asleep, the other sat by his side watching. Presently from the sleeper's mouth there came out his *jiwa* in the form of a lizard and went to feed. A dog saw it and chased it into an ant-hill. There it saw a pot full of rupees.
>
> The other man covered the sleeper's face with coal-dust for a joke. When the *jiwa* returned it did not recognize its body with the blackened face, and went away seeking for it elsewhere. By and by the second man noticed a lizard going to and fro, and soon realized what had happened. He quickly cleaned the sleeper's face, and the lizard, recognizing the body, entered it, and became a *jiwa* again.
>
> When the sleeper awoke he told his friend what he had seen in his dreams, and they went to the ant-hill and found the rupees. This is a true tale of what actually occurred.[2]

[1] Compare *The Baiga*, p. 408.

[2] The literature of the 'separable soul' is considerable. It appears in folk-tales as the useful motif of 'entering another's body' which, as Penzer rightly insists, must not be confused with the quite distinct 'life-index' motif. Crooke observes that 'in Bombay it is considered most reprehensible to play jokes on a sleeping person, such as painting the face in fantastic colours, or giving moustaches to a sleeping woman. The absent soul may not be able to find its own body, the appearance of which has been thus changed, and may depart altogether, leaving the body a corpse'.—*Religion and Folk-Lore*, Vol. I, p. 232. For the subject generally see *The Ocean of Story*, Vol. I, p. 37, n. 2; A. E. Crawley, 'Doubles', Hastings' *E.R.E.*, Vol. IV, pp. 853f.; M. Bloomfield, 'On the Art of Entering Another's Body', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. LVI, pp. 1ff.;

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Another tale, from Atargaon, points the same moral.

> Dream and Wealth were disputing which was the greater. When they could not agree they decided that each should hide in turn and whoever could find the other, yet not be found himself, would win the contest. Wealth hid himself first. He took the shape of a pot of rupees and hid in an ant-hill. Dream went to a very poor boy who was lying asleep and called his soul to come out. When the *jiwa* came Dream sent it to the ant-hill. It returned, and when the boy awoke he went to the ant-hill and dug up Wealth in the shape of the pot. Then Dream hid in the wind, and was blown here and there about the world. Wealth could not find him and when they met again he admitted that Dream was the greater.

In this other world into which the *jiwa* can enter during sleep, the gods and the Departed are familiar figures and the *jiwa* can talk with them and learn their will. Often, however, the Muria speak as though the gods and the dead had come to them in sleep, that the approach was, as it were, from the other side. Obviously the ordinary Muria, any more than the ordinary Englishman, has no consistent theory. One thing which has puzzled him, and which he explains by a fantastic tale, is the 'falsity' or symbolism of dreams. In Berma I was given a story which accounts for this.

> Long ago men could read the future in their dreams. An owl heard of it and said, 'If men can see the future in dreams, they will never die'. The owl waited till the gods were holding a darbar and then fell with a bang into the midst of them. The gods said, 'What is the matter?' The owl replied, 'I have had a dream, and in that dream I was marrying a Raja's daughter. We had done eleven rounds of the Lagir; had it been twelve she had been mine; but I awoke and fell to the ground. Now I must marry this girl. What am I to do?' The gods were concerned and said to one another, 'How can a red-eyed bird marry a Raja's daughter?' The owl replied, 'But all the world gets what it sees in dreams; how can it be that only my dreams are false?' At that the gods cursed men saying, 'From now on, let all dreams be false'.

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Dreams, therefore, are symbolic. They are code messages from the other world and only the wise can decipher them. There is a fairly extensive system of dream-interpretation, on the whole consistently maintained throughout the Muria area although with a few variations from place to place. I will tabulate these interpretations for the reader's convenience.

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	Good Dreams
One's dead parents ..	.. Lucky, for it shows they have retained their affection for one.
Drowning in a river ..	.. Very good. The Yer Kanyang so loves the dreamer that she wants to marry him.

Sir J. G. Frazer, *Taboo and Perils of the Soul*, pp. 37 and 49; *Panjab Notes and Queries*, Vol. III, p. 166 (which gives a tale with a similar motif to that in the text); W. A. Clouston, *Popular Tales and Fictions* (Edinburgh, 1887), Vol. I, p. 437.

For a Santal story of a soul which slipped out of a man's sleeping body in the form of a lizard and was prevented from returning, see B. Bonnerjea, 'The Social and Ceremonial Life of the Santals', *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. LIX (1930), p. 100.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE GHOTUL AND RELIGION

I. The Ghotul Festivals

THROUGHOUT this book we have seen the important part that the chelik play in the religious life of the tribe. Their success in hunting is the best of omens for the coming harvest; their drumming and dancing adds excitement and delight to the dreariest routine. They serve very much the function of a choir, a choir, moreover, which contains a rather high proportion of theological students. For many of these boys are already training to be clan-priests, Kaser-Gaita or Siraha mediums. At the time of sacrifice the Gaita may take his son and make him perform the actual rite, anxiously watching to see that there is no mistake. At Masora, Lakmu and his son Phirtu carried the Anga on their shoulders together and were moved to and fro by a divine inspiration that came equally to both. I have often seen young chelik dancing in trance, beating themselves with iron scourges, and tossing their dark beautiful hair into wild disorder.

But in addition to being choir-boys and acolytes for their elders, the chelik have festivals of their own which are closely connected with the ghotul. At Diwali, before the motiari go out on their dancing expeditions,[1] the boys and girls collect parched rice and have a feast in the ghotul, at which they admit new members and give them their titles.

At Jhakri, they described how at Diwali the motiari bring parched rice and gur for Tallur Muttai who, in this ghotul, lives in one of the pillars. They offer it first to her, and then all feast together. At Gorma, there was a stone by the village boundary where the children went for this feast. Decorations, sometimes elaborately made with ears of rice and flowers, are strung over the ghotul door.

At Dassera, which is not observed in the villages, the chelik dress one of their number as a Raja, put him on a throne, sometimes even on a wooden chariot; the 'ghotul ryots' bring him presents and he gives gifts to the Diwan, Tahsildar and other State servants. Every boy and girl brings two cucumbers which, in ghotul currency, represent two goats. They stick wooden legs into them and sacrifice them to Danteshwari. They invite a few of the village elders and have a feast in the ghotul.

In some villages—I have noted the custom in the Chalka Pargana—the chelik and motiari have their own version of the Irpu Pandum. At the end of the mahua season they spend three days collecting the flowers—this must be done at the end of the season, for it is believed that after these three days the flowers stop falling—and make liquor for themselves, boiling the flowers in water with slices of mango. If there is a Kalar out-still contractor in the

[1] Such ceremonial parades are not unknown elsewhere. The Chherta and similar dances are common throughout Middle India. 'It is a well-known practice', so C. R. Krishnamacharlu informs me, 'in the Tamil, Telugu and Kanara areas of Southern India for village schoolmasters and their students to go to the several households of the villages singing laudatory songs and receiving presents during the Dassera holidays.' The boys carry decorated bows and shoot sandal powder at their hosts. Krishnamacharlu compares this to the Chelidonia festival of ancient Rhodes, when boys went singing and begging from door to door. See also *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. II, p. 53 and Vol. III, p. 63.

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tics both waking and sleeping, but they form a very small proportion of criminals. On the whole, the dream-life of criminals shows that they are insensitive and unemotional, true imbeciles in feeling and partly so in intelligence.[1]

The dreams of Maria prisoners mainly agree with this. The aboriginal theory of dreams is that the *jiwa* or soul leaves the body in sleep and goes out to seek adventure. The dream is what it sees as it goes to and fro about the world. In prison the soul takes every opportunity to leave the confined and frustrated body, and goes home to visit the family or roams abroad in search of variety. Barse Mata said, 'In my sleep I really feel as though the soul was leaving my body. It runs to the house and sees all my people there'. Another man described how his wife came and slept with him in his dream, and how he would go out and see his family and his dead father whom he had murdered. But, he added, his father never reproached him for what he had done. Boti described how he saw dances, bazaars, his relatives and wife and children. Marvi Kuma said that his soul frequently went home to visit his wife. Muchaki Dasru sees his wife and children at night. He sits up and wants to weep. But on another occasion he finds, as he said, that 'the dream is the chutney of sleep' and by its help he has been able, in spite of imprisonment, to see all that is going on in the outside world. Munda sees girls, fighting-cocks, horses (which are bad), snakes (which are good). His soul constantly seeks rice-beer and tobacco. Vetti Rupe said that he saw his family in dreams, and sometimes a witch or a sorcerer. 'Even now our enemies can trouble us from outside the jail'. He said that he found dreams alarming, for in the ordinary way if a Maria has an inauspicious dream, he can make suitable offerings and free himself of the danger. In the jail there is no shrine and no chaplain for this purpose.

Very tender experiences between husband and wife occur in dreams, and one boy described how his young wife came to him in sleep and gave him the food he loved and slept with him. More moving still, reminding one of a famous incident in Browning's *Ring and the Book*, was the experience of a boy who killed his wife in a drunken rage. 'When I

[1] Havelock Ellis, op. cit., pp. 152 f.